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## MEMORANDUM

Date: June 29, 2007  
To: Parks and Recreation Department Commissioners  
From: William C. Scalzo, Director *WCS*  
Re: **Director's Summary of Current Events**

Listed below are issues that the department has been involved with since the June Director's Summary.

### **Director**

Effective July 2, 2007, I am stepping aside from my role as the Director of Parks & Recreation department. R.J. Cardin has been promoted to the Director position. This has been part of the planned succession transition in anticipation of my retirement later this year.

I will continue in my role as Assistant County Manager for Community Services and look forward to continuing my involvement as a supporter of parks well into the future.

### **Budget**

The Board of Supervisors approved the Commission's recommended fee schedule with one modification. Supervisor Stapley recommended deleting the per archer shooting fee. This amendment, along with the fee schedule, was supported by a 4 -1 vote of the Board. Supervisor Max Wilson cast the dissenting vote.

These fees are anticipated to produce an additional \$200,000 in revenue for FY07. Half of that has already been committed to the funding for our most recent market study. OMB is eagerly eyeing the rest.

### **Superintendent Report**

**San Tan Mountain Regional Park:** The tortoises have adapted well to their new habitat, making brief appearances in the early morning and late evening hours. The park plans to host its first tortoise program, Desert Tortoise Discovery, on Saturday, July 21<sup>st</sup>.

On June 15th, White Tank staff presented a special Animal Encounters at Night program. Visitors were able to see and learn about a variety of rattlesnakes, insects and a banded Gila Monster.

The "Better than Coffee" fitness hike lived up to its title on June 10. Energetic visitors participated in the first hike to the top of Goldmine Mountain on the newest addition to the San Tan trail.

The trails crew is currently working on adding three additional trails, which will take visitors to the scenic backside of the park near Rock Peak and the Malpais Hills.

**Usery Mountain Regional Park:** June has proven to be a stable month following a substantial spring season for Usery Park. Weekend camping has held solid for a summer month with an increase in day-use and annual pass sales over June 06. With the cooler morning temperatures this June, Wind Cave hikers have been active in the early mornings.

Usery Park's ranger offered 16 programs in June. The Strawberry Full Moon Hike and the early morning fitness hikes were the most attended programs this month. Fun programs were "Find the Father Day Hike" and National Trails Day on the Wind Cave Trail. Staff also assisted at the Desert Outdoor Center with the aquatics programs for the Boy Scouts.

Construction is moving upward on the entry station. We have walls, windows and a partial roof.

**McDowell Mountain Regional Park:** Attendance at McDowell as of the projected end of this fiscal year shows an increase of approximately 5,000 park visitors or about a 7.4% increase over FY 05-06. McDowell has experienced a 32% increase in attendance at the park since June of 2003.

Maintenance staff at the park has been busy checking fence line and repairing cut or damaged fence. They are also putting up ghost fences enclosing the area where gates have been installed in private fences surrounding the park. These gates open onto the park and allow neighbors to hike and ride their horses off trail creating spider trails and damaging the ecosystem of the desert.

The park has found summer hosts who have provided staffing at the Visitor Center allowing the park to keep that facility open 7 days a week.

The first Mountain Bike by the Moon Light ride attracted 70 riders and the participants included couples, families and groups of single riders.

**Cave Creek Mountain Regional Park:** Volunteer Connie Grossman led an early bird hike for all those braving the heat on the Overton trail. The park is fortunate this year with a new host that started 06/18/07. Training is underway and the host will be ready to assist the staff with various tasks and duties.

Maintenance staff from the eastside had a clean-up day at the 40<sup>th</sup> Street & Union Hills corner at Adobe Dam Regional Park. Weeds and trash were removed and round-up was sprayed to assist with future weeding.

**Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area (SCRCA):** Staff assisted on a video production regarding open space conservation with students of Desert Sun Middle School.

Interpretive staff provided a week of his expert assistance to the Desert Outdoor Center for their Boy Scout Aquatics and Nature Camper.

Staff relocated the park office from the Cave Creek Town Hall to the Court Annex to accommodate additional town engineering staff.

**Estrella Mountain Regional Park:** June finds park staff attending to some year end projects. The first phase of the El Rio project is almost complete as 400 plants have been added to the test plot along the Gila River on the park. Irrigation schedules are being finalized for the park to supply water to these new plants until they can establish a good root base.

Despite high temperatures groups are still coming in to celebrate under the ramadas and baseball players brave the summer sun each weekend.

Interpretive programs have been receiving good press for unique kid's events and family programming including the "Pirates" compass and map program.

**White Tank Mountain Regional Park:** With the heat visitation has slowed, however the Outreach Interpretive Programs have been going strong. Outreach programs support the effort toward the Department's Mission and Initiative statement to reduce the number of people reporting "little or no knowledge of the County Parks". Recently there have been 16 White Tank Outreach Programs that educated 736 attendees.

An Arizona Game and Fish Grant was submitted in an attempt to rebuild a windmill over the old well at the horse staging trailhead area. It is hoped that a wildlife viewing pond and connector trail could be made.

Positive feedback has come to park staff in the Visitor Center about the good work done on the Mesquite Trail in the park. New trail alignment and tread work is underway. About 50% of the new portion is open and receiving rave reviews. The Waterfall Trail improvements are underway by the Trails and Construction Crews. The White Tank staff is working on interpretive panels set for the trail.

Summer projects continue, staff has expanded and improved more campsites, weeded, trimmed branches and re-organized the maintenance building and compound area.

**Lake Pleasant Regional Park:** The new air conditioning units are up and running in the Operations Center now! Quotes have been completed and Metro Mechanics will install new AC units at the Visitor Center to replace the units that were vandalized in May at the Visitor Center.

An additional floating restroom is scheduled to be installed in the Honeymoon Cove area for boaters and the Desert Outdoor Center guest by the end of June or the 1<sup>st</sup> week of July.

*July 3 Fireworks Celebration (July 3, 9pm)* - Flyers are posted in kiosks and various community calendars.

**Agua Fria Conservation Area Construction** - The Maintenance Supervisor has designed and is in the process of constructing a new Iron Ranger to be installed in the area. Contractors have been obtained by the Bureau of Reclamation to repair the existing gate and install pipe rail fencing for the scheduled July 1<sup>st</sup> closure to restrict vehicle access in the area. New signage has been purchased and will be install the week of June 25<sup>th</sup> to June 29<sup>th</sup>.

**Desert Outdoor Center:** Staff has been preparing for and conducting the first half of the summer "Lake Pleasant Aquatics and Nature Camp." The cooperating agencies remain Parks, Boy Scouts of America, and Arizona Game and Fish Department. The fee has increased from \$180 to \$190 per week (Monday thru Thursday). The Boy Scouts organize registration, transportation, and the fee collection. The DOC is a "Provisional Camp" of BSA, and as such use of the DOC is covered by a Special Use Permit issued to BSA.

## **Marketing Update**

### 1) Collaborative efforts

a) **Agua Fria Conservations Area.** On July 1, 2007, officials will begin enforcing the motorized vehicle restriction in the Agua Fria conservation area. The information has been advertised via:

- i) **Media relations.** The Foothills Focus, Arizona Republic, Wildlife News, Desert Rat and Arizona Boating and Watersports have run stories in their respective publications. A second press release highlighting the motorized vehicle restriction was issued on June 15<sup>th</sup>.
- ii) **Website.** During the month of June, the Website experienced a surge in activity:

	June*	May
Total hits	1,945	1,309

\*Numbers good through 6/22/07.

### 2) Other

#### a) **Media.**

- i) Arizona Republic editor, Kathleen Ingley, released an editorial titled *Pay \$6 to use county parks? Gladly* on June 19<sup>th</sup> which heavily supported the proposed fee increase.
- ii) Arizona Tourist will feature a small article and photo on the Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area.
- iii) Arizona Highways Television aired a segment on Lake Pleasant Regional Park on Saturday, June 2 (9:05 p.m.) and Sunday, June 3 (11 p.m.). The video featured an interview with Terry Gerber, Lake Pleasant interpretive ranger, at the Visitor's Center. A copy of the segment may be viewed at <http://www.azcentral.com/travel/azhighways/azhwyindex.html>.

#### b) **Website.**

- i) **Maps.** Numerous new maps have been uploaded on the Parks Website.
- ii) **RFPs.** The Paradise Valley Amusement Concession RFP is now available under the Planning and Construction link.

### **Contract Updates**

***Paradise Valley:*** The RFP to operate and maintain the existing Casey at the Bat Complex will be released July 16, 2007.

### **Coming and Going in Human Resources**

The following people recently left our department, Angie Cedillo from Estrella and Charlene Valentine from White Tank. A new Park Maintenance Worker has been hired for the Desert Outdoor Center; Adolfo Mancillas, he started work on June 25<sup>th</sup>. We are currently recruiting for the Procurement Specialist for Headquarters.

Interviews were held for Interpretive Ranger for Cave Creek Regional Park and McDowell Mountain Regional Park. Brooke Disney was selected for McDowell Park. No one was chosen for the Cave Creek position.